

An Intervention for Problematic Internet Use among Young Adults: A Pilot Study (Phase II)

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Introduction

- Excessive use of the internet has become a cause for concern in many countries, including Malaysia.
- Such behaviour is reported to be more prevalent amongst younger people with adolescents and young adults most likely to report spending large amount of time on the internet.
- The possible negative consequences of excessive internet use include poor physical health (**bad diet, poor sleep patterns, low level of physical activity**), disruption to career (**study or work**) progress, and social withdrawal (**lack of time spent in face-to-face interactions with peers and family in real world settings**) (Kormas, Critselis, Janikian, Kafetzis, & Tsitsika, 2011; Kuss, & Griffiths, 2011).



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Year 2011-2012: Research Grant (Phase I)

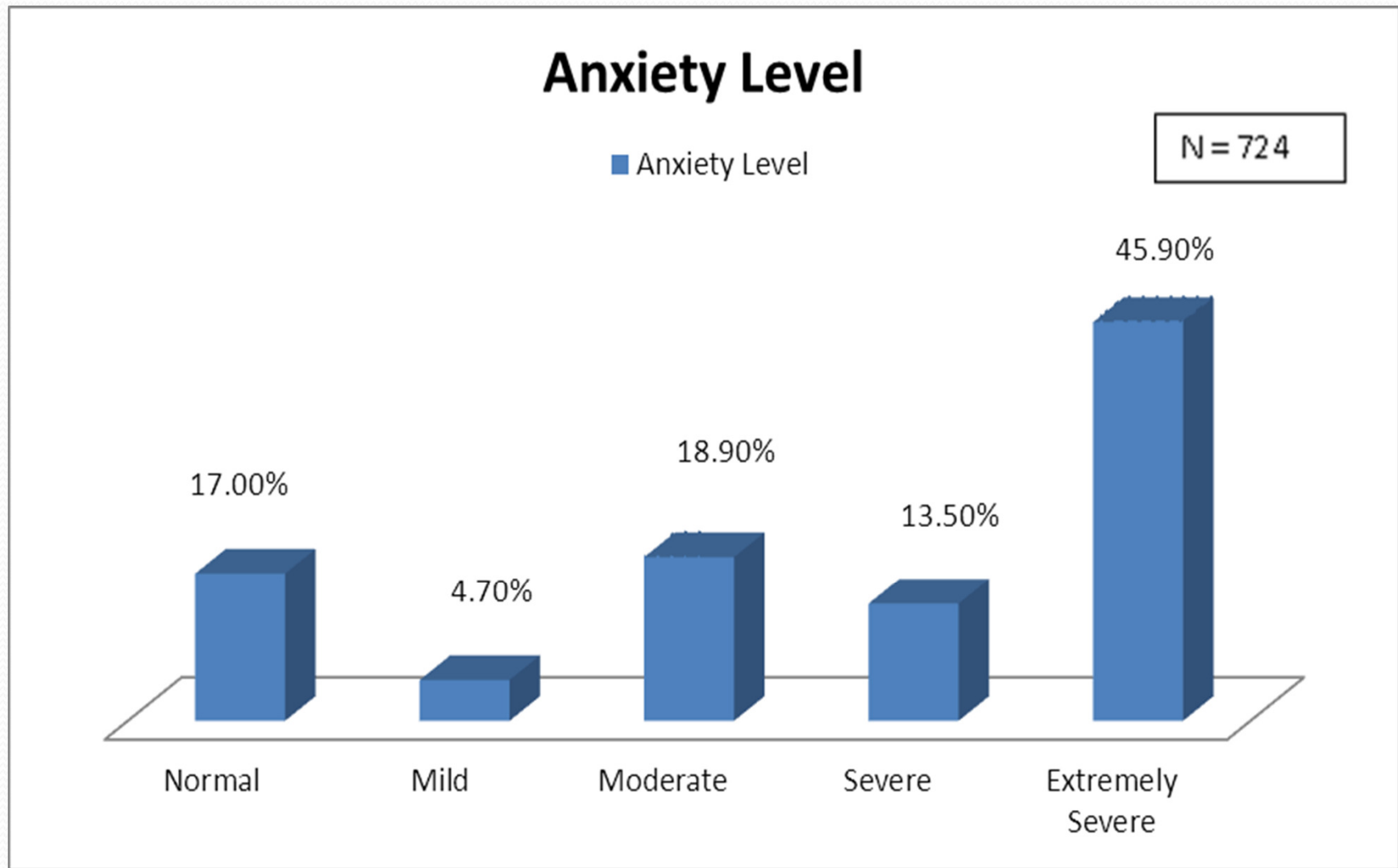
‘Research Collaboration on Networked Media Content’

**“My Online Friends Understand Me Better”
: The Impact of Social Networking Site Usage on
Adolescent Social Tie and Mental Health”**

Total: 724 University Students

	Regions	Universities
Peninsular Malaysia	Northern	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
	East Coast	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT)
	Central	University of Malaya (UM) Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)
	Southern	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)
East Malaysia	Sabah	Universiti Sabah Malaysia (UNS)
	Sarawak	Universiti Sarawak Malaysia (UNIMAS)

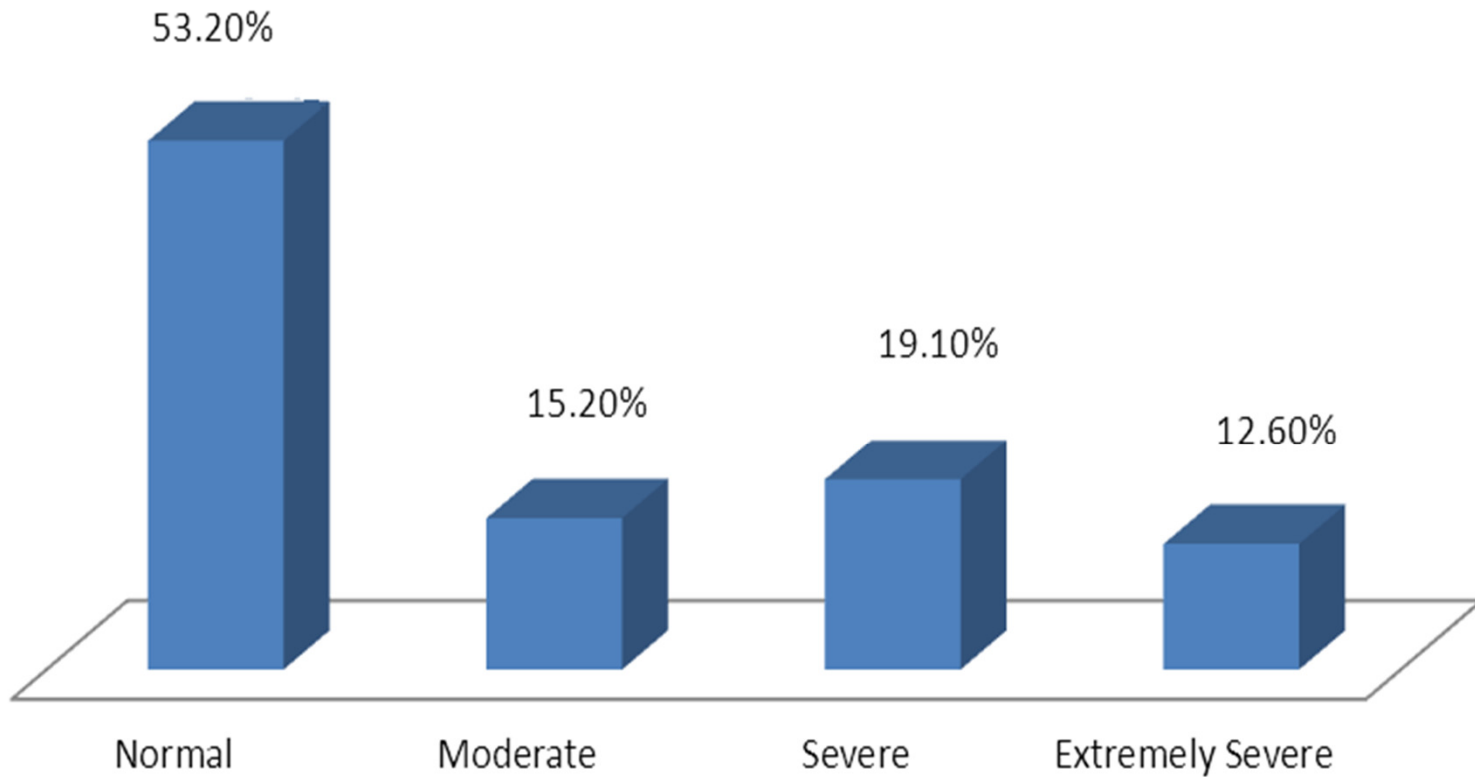
Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21)



Depression Level

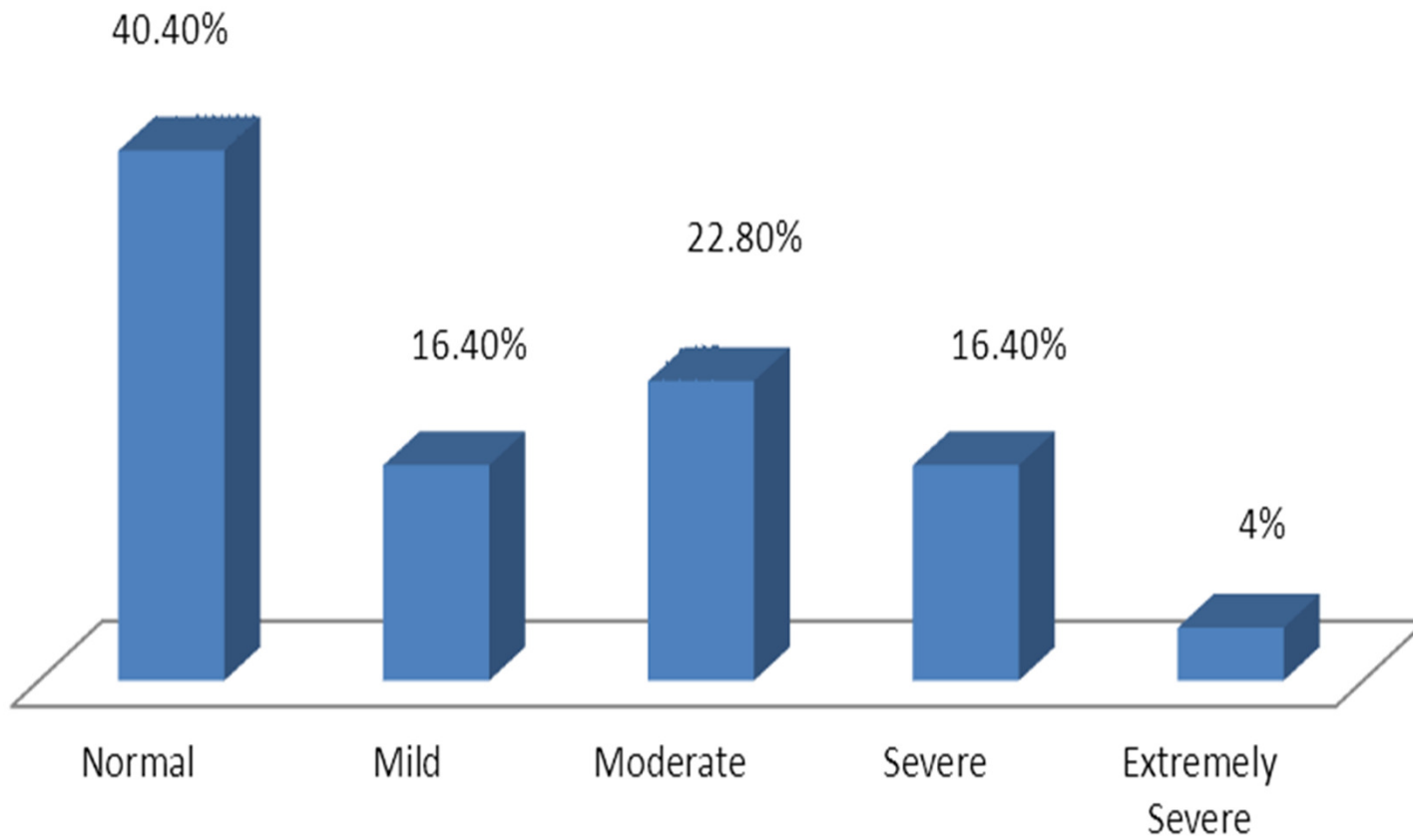
■ Depression Level

N = 724



Stress Level

■ Stress Level





Literature Review

- The results of a recent study in Malaysia by [Ke and Wong \(2012\)](#) found high levels of stress and anxiety in a large group of SNS users. These findings are similar to those found by other researchers who have reported that high social anxiety is associated with problematic internet use, and that people with problematic internet use report **higher social anxiety in real-life interaction than in online social interaction** (Yen et al., 2012).
- Similarly, problematic internet users have been found to spend time online **avoiding interpersonal relationships** with real and known people (Tonioni et al., 2012).

Phase II- Objectives

- The aim of this research project is to develop an ‘**Intervention Programme**’ to **reduce problematic internet use** among young adults using a manual-based ‘**Cognitive Behavioural Therapy-CBT**’ programme.
- The programme focuses on **reducing the level of stress and anxiety** in problematic internet users, with an emphasis on teaching skills to **reduce social anxiety and increasing social interactions** in real life face-to-face settings.



Methodology

Participant

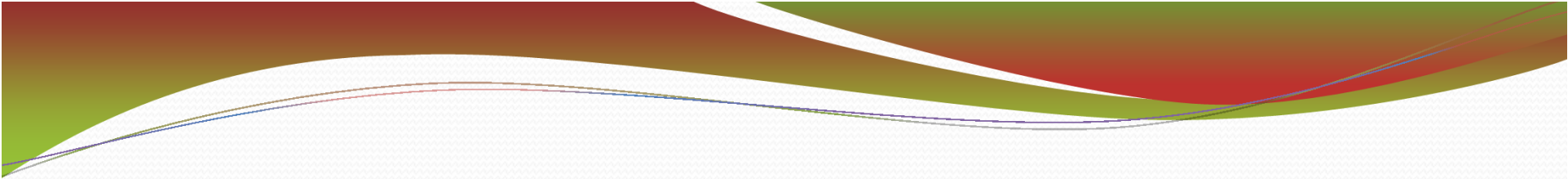
- ❖ University students age between the age of 18-23 years old.
- ❖ Self-identified their internet use as problematic and be motivated to change their behaviour.
- ❖ Token Appreciation given to participants.



Descriptive Study

The three questionnaire used are,

- a) **Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire**
(Koronczai et al., 2011)
- b) **Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scales**
(DASS)
- c) **Social Interaction Anxiety Scale**
(Mattick & Clarke, 1998)



Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire (PIUQ) used to measure the psychological and behavioral problems associated with excessive Internet usage.

Three dimensions in PIUQ,

- **Obsession** scale is defined as a psychological fixation with the Internet, and the **worry, anxiety, and depression** which are accompanied with an inability to access the Internet.
- **Neglect** scale is the **negligence of typical activities** (e.g., working and eating).
- **Control Disorder** is defined as an **inability to decrease the amount of time on the Internet** or a self-perception of excessive Internet usage as problematic.

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21)	Items
<p>Depression:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uniquely characterized by low positive affect. ▪ Measure symptoms typically associated with dysphoric mood (e.g., sadness or worthlessness). ▪ Assesses dysphoria, hopelessness, devaluation of life, self-deprecation, lack of interest or involvement. 	<p>3. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all. 5. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things. 10. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to. 13. I felt down-hearted and blue. 16. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything. 17. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person. 21. I felt that life was meaningless.</p>
<p>Anxiety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has physiological hyperarousal as a unique feature. ▪ Related to symptoms of physical arousal, panic attacks, and fear (e.g., trembling or faintness). ▪ Assesses autonomic arousal, skeletal muscle effects, situational anxiety, and subjective experience of anxious affect 	<p>2. I was aware of dryness of my mouth. 4. I experienced breathing difficulty (eg, excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion). 7. I experienced trembling (eg, in the hands). 9. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself. 15. I felt I was close to panic. 19. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (eg, sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat). 20. I felt scared without any good reason.</p>
<p>Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measure symptoms such as tension, irritability, and a tendency to overreact to stressful events ▪ Assesses difficulty relaxing, nervous arousal, and being easily upset or agitated, irritable or over reactive, and impatient 	<p>1. I found it hard to wind down. 6. I tended to over-react to situations. 8. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy. 11. I found myself getting agitated. 12. I found it difficult to relax. 14. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing. 18. I felt that I was rather touchy.</p>

Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (Mattick & Clarke, 1998)

- ‘Distress when meeting and talking with other people’
This tool is helpful in tracking social anxiety symptoms over time.

Questions,

1. I get nervous if I have to speak with someone in authority (teacher, boss, etc.)
2. I have difficulty making eye contact with others.
3. I become tense if I have to talk about myself or my feelings.

Research Design-Intervention

- The current project utilizes **single-case experimental** design methodology (Morgan & Morgan, 2009).
- A manual-based '**Cognitive Behavioural Therapy-CBT**' programme is applied in this study to help students overcome their social anxiety. CBT is based on how **emotions work and what people can do to feel better** (Allyn & Bacon, 2009).
- CBT involves a series of **skill base exercises** to improve social interaction skill and later overcome social anxiety. These skills **take practice and anybody can learn them**.
- CBT evaluates the effects of **behavioral interventions** and **change over time**.



Procedure

- **Daily record of internet use.** Participants were asked to nominate the device they use to access the internet, and they were requested to only use that device for the duration of the research. A programme which records time spent on the internet was installed on the participants' laptop/smart phone/tablet. These records were collected throughout all phases of the project.
- **Daily self-report of internet use.** Participants were prompted by SMS to provide an estimate of the time they spent on the internet during the previous day. They were asked to indicate how much time was spent on functional activities (related to study/work, paying bills, etc.) and how much was spent on recreational activities (social networking sites, gaming, emailing friends, etc.). These reports were collected throughout all phases of the project.



❖ Self-report questionnaires on three occasions;

A. Pre-intervention

B. Post-intervention

C. Follow-up

Intervention Timeline

The diagram illustrates the intervention timeline. It features a grid with activities on the y-axis and weeks (w1 to w12) on the x-axis. The timeline is divided into three phases: Pre-intervention (w1), Intervention (w2-w9), and Post Intervention (w10-w12). Three time points are marked: T1 at the start of w1, T2 at the start of w10, and T3 at the start of w12. Blue arrows point down from T1, T2, and T3 to the grid. Blue shaded cells indicate when an activity is occurring.

Timeline Activities	Pre-intervention	Intervention								Post Intervention		
	w1	w2	w3	w4	w5	w6	w7	w8	w9	w10	w11	w12
Attend a one-time pre-study briefing session	Blue											
Daily self-report of Internet usage via SMS by participants	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue			Blue
Attend a weekly intervention session, one meeting per week, each meeting lasts 90 minutes		Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue			
Automatic recording of Internet usage using software	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue			Blue



Data Analysis

- The results from this project will be primarily analysed in two ways:
 - a) The information on daily internet usage will be graphed for each subject and inspected visually.
 - b) The results from the three self-report questionnaires will be analysed via Repeated One Way Anova.



Implication

- The results from this pilot project will provide detailed information on **‘what works for whom’** with regards to reducing problematic internet use.
- It will provide the **basis for a larger multi-site study** conducted with those most at risk of developing problematic internet use habits especially **secondary school and university students**.



Implication

- This research project would be orientated towards **'PREVENTION'** of problematic internet use.
- The methodological approach adopted by this project will ensure that any change resulting from the intervention is meaningful and relevant for the individual. It will also provide information that is readily able to be adopted into

'PRACTICE GUIDELINES'



THANK YOU